

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

JULY 1981

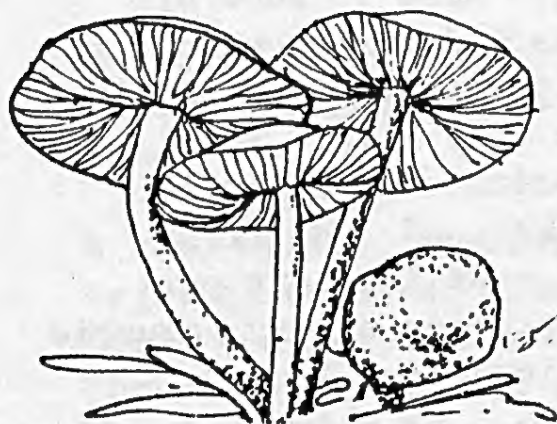
EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting : 3rd July - "Fungi" - Mrs. F. Chuk.

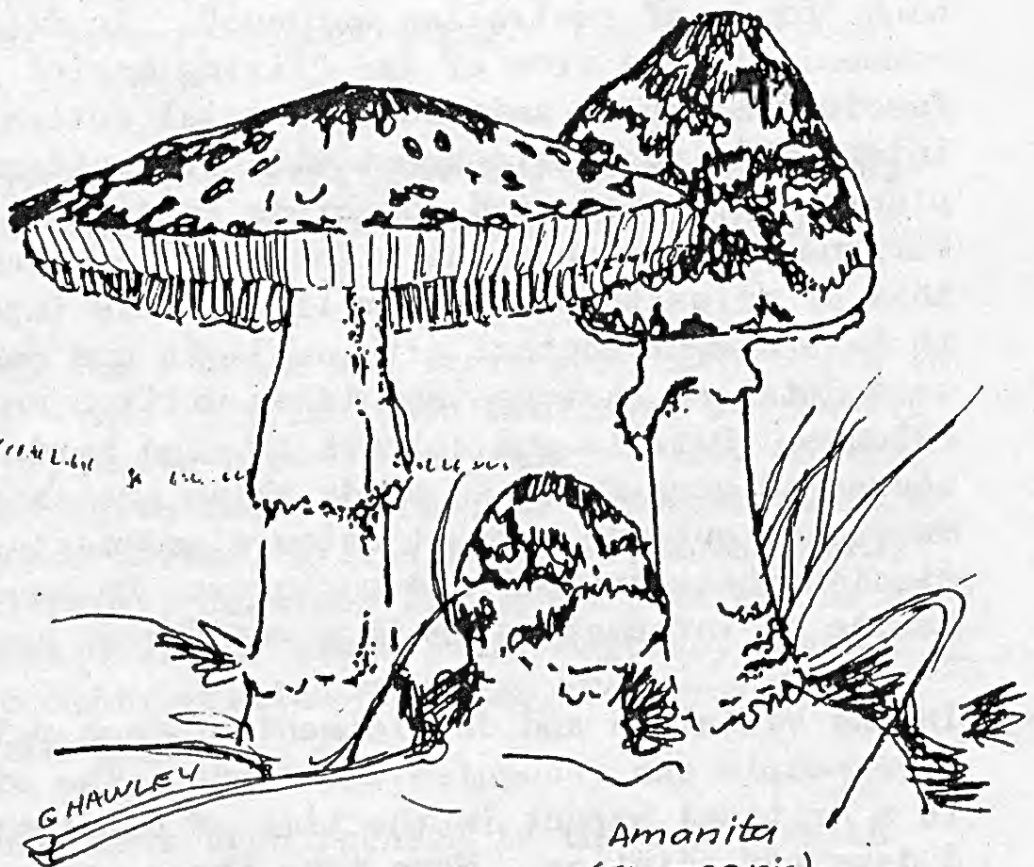
Meeting : 7th August - "Ferns" - Mr. E. Errey.

Excursion : 4th July - Saturday - Half day : Fungi, Invermay.
Leader : Mrs. F. Chuk.

Excursion : 9th August - Sunday - Full day : Ferns, Mt. Cole.
Leader : Mr. E. Errey.



Fairy Ring



Amanita
(Fly agaric)

President: Dr. F. HARRAP	Phone 30 1651
Vice-pres: Mrs. M. ROTHERAM	Phone 31 4054
Secretary: Miss H. BURGESS	Phone 31 2210
Treasurer: Mr. S. REYNOLDS	Phone 32 7721
Editor: Mr. J. NETHERWAY	Phone 32 7296

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

STELLA BEDGGOOD MEMORIAL LECTURE

On June 5th at St Paul's Hall, our president extended a warm welcome to a near capacity audience for the third Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture. This was given by Peter Trusler, a very talented young artist who specializes in painting birds. His subject was "The Artist in Nature".

Peter was born in Yallourn and spent his school years here in Ballarat. His interest in Nature was nurtured by our own Club. For seven years he studied painting with Miss Jessie Merritt. He is a science graduate from Monash University. Majoring in Zoology with sub. majors in botany and biology taught him methods of thinking which help him in his art.

After freelancing for 2½ years he was asked to illustrate the book "Birds of Australian Gardens". In doing this he tried to communicate his view of the "living magic" which is so fascinating about animals in a total setting. Also to show his interest in the environment with its patterns and textures in plants, bark etc., and the birds relationship with their habitats. Various aspects show the lifestyles in which they live. To do this he tries to paint from life. It is important for an artist to have direct contact with subjects and background. He first does detailed sketches and takes written notes of the soft part colours. Details and colours of dead birds provide a very valuable source to work from, so study skins are obtained from the museum to get the correct colours and textures. He also studies their anatomy and postures. Photography is a great source of information as it gives frozen moments of activity.

In the evolution and development of each painting he must make sure people can recognise the birds. The size of each painting is a critical aspect in the time of completion. Average of about 8 days per painting. Some take three weeks, while a small painting might take two days. Coloured slides of his subjects ably illustrated his interesting insight into an artist's view of nature.

Jean Spicer.

JUNE EXCURSION - BITTERN LAGOON WORKING BEE

A very small contingent of 4 adults and my grandson set out in the morning to be joined after lunch by four more adults. As we waited at Langi Kal Kal for Graham Baird to escort us out to the Lagoon Galahs and Plovers wheeled noisily overhead and lots of chirruping sparrows were enjoying the pleasant weather. A pair of Swamp Harriers and a pair of Brolgas were cause for excitement as we neared the Lagoon. Quite some time was spent lazily examining the trees and shrubs that had been planted last August - the boys at the Centre had placed wire guards and several had been knocked over by cattle and sheep - which are being kept out as much as possible now, although some fun was had trying to shoo a few wayward sheep back through a hole in the fence. Although a lot of the smaller shrubs and trees have been lost, we were pleased to see quite a few holding their own - mainly Eucalypts, Acacias and a few Melaleucas, and good to see some tiny River Red Gums bravely regenerating. The Magnificent old specimens are a joy to behold!

Our main efforts were directed at straightening guards, pulling excess dry grass from around the plants and generally tidying them.

A toad created diversion for a while and there were many birds to enjoy as we moved about - the list included Swallows, Red-Wattle Bird, Red-Rumped Parrots, White-plumed Honeyeaters, Grey Shrike Thrush, White Necked and White Faced Herons, Tree Martin, Cattle Egrets, Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike, Willie Wagtails, Kookaburra, Pardalote, Magpie Lark, Pipit, Restless Flycatcher, Whistling Kite, Mountain Duck, Black Duck, Goshawk, Black Swan, Magpies, Raven, Long Billed Corellas, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Eastern Rosellas, Goldfinches and Gulls.

A couple of small islands have been created in the swamp, which was mainly dry at this stage.

Florence Williamson.

CRESWICK FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB MEETING, 18.6.81.

Five of our members were among the forty or so who attended this meeting, the first part of which was devoted to discussion of the Clunes Swamps. The meeting, led by Mr. Harry Barclay - President of the Creswick Club, and Mr. Don White of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department, agreed that an Advisory Committee should be formed to help the Fisheries and Wildlife Department manage the Clunes Swamps area.

The committee, consisting of two members from each of the Creswick, Maryborough and Ballarat Field Naturalists' Clubs, the Society for Growing Australian Plants, the Ballarat Field and Game Club, Don White and John Clements from Fisheries and Wildlife, and Mr. Don McMahon of Creswick, would probably meet twice each year, and would advise as to trees and shrubs to be planted, would arrange working-bees to help to plant and maintain these, and generally keep a watch over the area. Our Club has not yet nominated its two members, and is seeking information as to place and time of meetings before doing so.

Don also showed slides depicting the journey up and to the east of Tennant Creek and back through the Nullabor to Eucla in search of additional female birds for breeding purposes. Because of the good season the birds had spread more widely than usual, and due to their secretive nature the females were more difficult to locate than the displaying males. The latter provided some practice with the net and the special gun for launching it; all-in-all, the trip was most successful - a dozen females, which will be a valuable addition to the breeding stock, were captured, and several eggs have been successfully incubated.

KINGSTON'S TOURS

Coach camping safari tours for Naturalists in co-operation with the W.V.F.N.C.A.

- Fifteen-day Tasmanian tour departing Stawell February 1st, 1982.
- Nine-day Cooper Creek Camp-out departing Stawell July 10th, 1982.
- Twenty-three day Gunbarrel Highway - Western Wildflowers Safari departing Stawell 11th September, 1982.

A brochure is available from our secretary if you are interested.

COCKIES CHAOS

from C.C.V. Newsletter, February 1981.

Populations of Long-billed Corellas and Sulphur crested Cockatoos have increased over the past few years and this has resulted in severe crop losses in Western Victoria.

This increase in numbers of these birds is probably due to farmers moving away from wool production and planting grain crops instead.

Birds attack crops just after the grain shoots, and again at earing and seeding. One sunflower grower lost half of 65 acres to cockatoos, and would not plant a further 200 acres for fear of loss. The estimated loss on 200 acres near Brimpaen was placed at \$20,000.

Farmers are naturally irate about the situation, and most being practical, independent operators, have tried to protect their crops with illegal shooting and in some cases poison. Very few applied for the official permit.

The powerful rural lobby was able to get new legislation enabling legal destruction by shooting, of any wildlife proclaimed in an area. The legislation was rushed through without due thought or investigation of its effects or effectiveness. It should be noted that conditions in the new legislation would be acceptable if the destruction of wildlife achieves protection for the farmers. However the haphazard and uncoordinated methods currently being practiced are having little impact on crop losses.

If there is any chance that the "blunderbus" short term shooting method will save some crops then it should be tried, but it is imperative, for the good of the farmers, that the following be adopted to give long term protection.



Long-billed Corella
Corella

Cacatua tenuirostris

The Department of Agriculture should take up its role of assisting farmers by investigation alternative planting procedures, including co-ordinated planting within a fixed district so that the total time span when crops are vulnerable is reduced, and improved harvesting methods to reduce grain left on the ground.

Studies to discover the birds' most favoured varieties, crops and growth conditions would also be of value.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Division should accept its role of managing wildlife by seeking more research into the reasons for population upsurge, and methods of preventing the formation of large flocks of birds.

They should also co-ordinate the shooting activities of farmers so that maximum impact on the flocks is maintained during fixed periods. One instance where 4000 - 5000 birds moved from one property to another as the landholders shot alternatively illustrates how critical this co-ordination is. The farmers themselves should work to avoid a cocky-warfare every year by :

eliminating food sources for seed-eating birds, such as grain spillages, incomplete harvesting and excess grain when handfeeding, seeking improved farming methods less attractive to the cockies,

and

adopting co-operative attacks more likely to break-up the large flocks thus reducing the impact of the remaining small groups to the tolerable.

The first settlers in Australia had little choice but to turn to strong-arm tactics to repel and eliminate pests. Hopefully we have advanced sufficiently since then to find methods more sympathetic to the environment.

Reg Johnson.



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo

Cacatua galerita

ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION

from C.C.V. Newsletter, February 1981.

Today about 1,000 forms of birds and mammals and about 20,000 species of plants throughout the world are recognised as endangered.

By the year 2000 it is estimated the world could lose between 500,000 and 600,000 species. Most of these losses will take place because of the destruction of tropical forests. From 15 to 20% of the world's forests may be cleared, mostly in the tropics, by the turn of the century.

The forest areas that are preserved by isolated reserves will of course save some samples of the various ecosystems, however, as most tropical species occur at low densities, their susceptibility to extinction through local catastrophe is very high. The effect of clearing the surrounding forest is also unknown; however it is likely to cause invasion of introduced species and local climatic changes with consequent effects on vegetation.

The situation in Australia though less dramatic, parallels that in the rest of the world. Habitat destruction has and still is causing extinction of our native plants and animals. In Victoria the Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*), Leadbeater's Possum (*Cymbelideus leadbeateri*), Helmeted Honeyeater (*Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*) and the Orange bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) are four species which may face extinction in the near future.

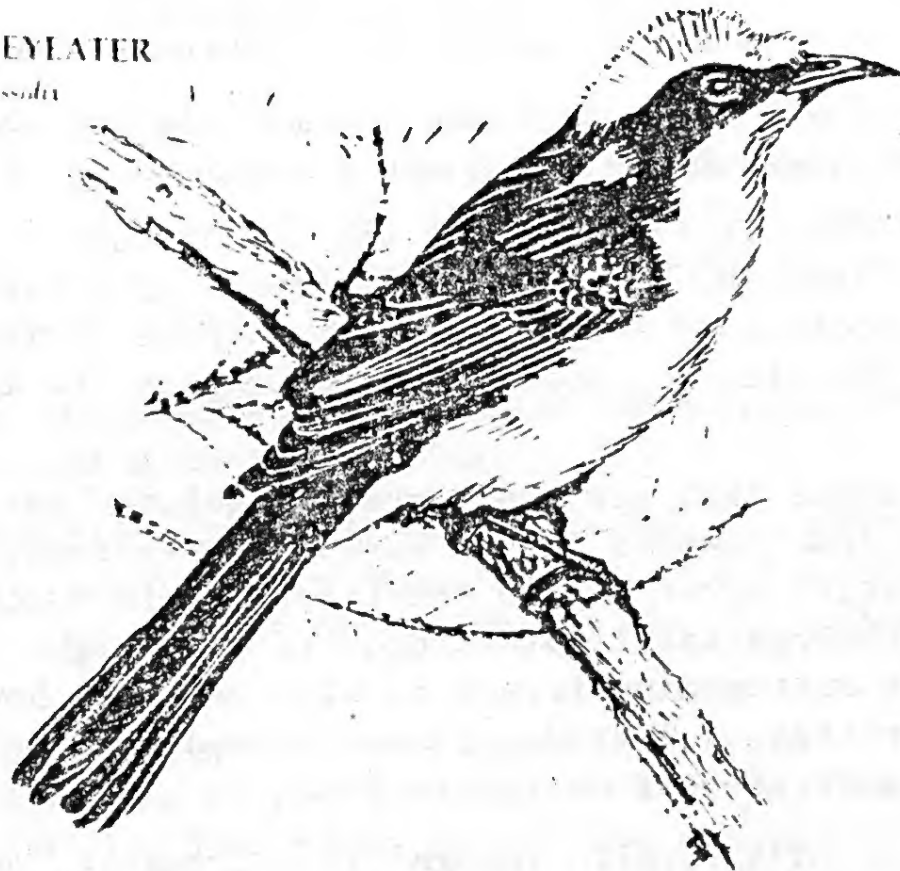
ORANGE-BELLIED PARROT

Neophema chrysogaster



HELMETED HONEYEATER

Lichenostomus xanthus (Lesser)



The Helmeted Honeyeater has very specific habitat requirements and an extremely small geographic distribution. It is found on the margins of creeks where there is an overstorey of tall mature eucalypts, such as the manna and swamp gums and acacias. Below this is a dense shrub understorey of species such as tea-tree, malaleuca and hakea. The Helmeted Honeyeater feeds on both nectar and insects.

The marked decline of the distribution and numbers of Helmeted Honeyeaters are attributed mainly to the destruction of its habitat by land clearance for grazing and later by heavy recreational use. A series of population counts from 1963 indicates that the population has stabilised at about 200 birds.

It is thought that, in the past, the Helmeted Honeyeater was widely distributed through the southern Gippsland Region of Victoria. Now it is only found along 10 km of stream margins on the Woori Yallock, Cockatoo and Sheepstation Creeks. The Helmeted Honeyeater was reported as inhabiting Cardinia Creek several years ago but has not been seen there recently.

The last stronghold of the Helmeted Honeyeater is within the Yellingbo State Faunal Reserve (226 ha).

AGENDA FOR THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB OF BALLARAT TO BE HELD AT THE SCHOOL OF MINES ON FRIDAY 3RD JULY, 1981.

The President will open the meeting.

Apologies.

Minutes.

Business Arising from Minutes:

Election of New Member

May Correspondence Outward:

Invitations to Mr. G. Mainwaring, Mr. G. Clarke, Miss L. Banfield, Miss J. Merritt, Mr. & Mrs. A.W. Strange, Mr. W. Lewis, Mr. P. Mansfield, Mr. A. Sonsee, Mr. A.T. Evansy (M.L.A.), Mr. & Mrs. R. Whitehead, Town Clerk, School of Forestry, Mr. & Mrs. P. Thomas, Mr. & Mrs. J. Wheeler; Syllabus cards to Mrs. L. Duffy, Mr. R. Houlihan, Mrs. H. Krusche; Mr. R. Hollioake i.e. Swamps; Mr. G. Baird; Miss L. Cotter.

Inward:

Replies to invitations - Mr. J. Hughes, Mr. & Mrs. P. Thomas, Miss Z. Banfield, Miss L. Cotter, Miss J. Merritt, Mr. I.C. Smith, Mr. A.T. Evans, Mrs. J. Abbott, Mrs. A. Knight, Mr. D. Nichols and syllabus;

Geelong PNC Newsletter, No.182 May 81; WWF Newsletter, receipt etc; BRACK Courses; "Whirrakee" Vol. 2, No. 4 May 81; NE Naturalist No's 63 & 64 March/April/May/June 81; Sun Nat. Vol.19, No.5 May 81; CCV Newsletter; Mr. I. McCann i.e. tours; Mr. & Mrs. R. Borch; Kelaston Appeal; VORG Conference application forms; Australasia Reference Research Publication; Mr. G. Baird, Langi Kel Kal; Mr. B.W. Court, Sec. for Minerals & Energy i.e. Gas Pipeline; Stawell Apex Club; Dr. E. Turner VTNCA; Australian Museum re: grant; Mr. G. Beanland receipt etc.

June Correspondence Outward:

Mr. G. Hocking Congratulations; Mr. R. Thomas re. Flax Mill Swamp; Mr. G. Baird re: excursion; Mr. P. Trusler; Mr. W. Davis; Mr. R. Hollioake; National Library Canberra.

Inward:

"Seeds" BCEC Newsletter No.18, May 81; Christmas Is. book offer; Mrs. P. McArdle subscription; "Whirrakee" Vol.2, No.5 June 81; ACF i.e. Rainforests; Mr. P. Genery i.e. syllabus; Sun Nat. Vol.19, No.6 June 81; CCV Agenda; Geelong PNC Newsletter No.183, June 81; Geelong Naturalist Vol.17, No.4 February 81; Mr. P. Trusler; Victorian Naturalist Vol.98, No.3 May/June 81.

Reports: TREASURER
 Committee
 Other

General Business: Nomination of New Members.
 Other.

Guest Speaker: Mrs. F. Chok - Fungi

Excursion: Half day - Saturday 4th July, Invermay - Fungi.

BHL



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